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INTERVIEW WITH ARCHBISHOP O'CONNOR OF NEW YORK, BROADCAST ON

RTE RADIO MARCH 18, 1985

Jim McDougal:

Archbishop O'Connor, what did you think of the St. Patrick's Day Parade yesterday?

Archbishop:

Oh, it was very very orderly, everything was quiet and peaceful. I had promised it would be so. I think that we have at least begun to restore it to its original concept, that it's a parade in honour of St. Patrick and of the people of all of Ireland. It was my personal conviction after much prayer and thought and a tremendous amount of advice that we simply will not let the parade be corrupted by those who wish to politicise it for any reason. And I am the Archbishop of New York, this parade is well over a century old, it has traditionally been in honour of St. Patrick and of all those in Ireland, those who have forebears in Ireland and we're just not going to let anyone use it or abuse it for his own ends.

Jim McDougal:

Do you think it was abused yesterday? Mr. King said he supported the IRA.

Archbishop:

Mr. King's personal political positions or whatever he does will not be allowed, his or any others, to corrupt the Parade. My announcements throughout the course of this entire week over television, over radio and in the press, made it very clear that I support no violence, no terrorism. I indict it, I condemn it. Nor do I support oppression of the Irish people or those things which tragically promote conflict - the deprivation of human rights and the injustices. My entire sermon yesterday was devoted to the pronouncement that in no way should my presence at the Parade be construed to support violence, to support terrorism in Ireland and that on the contrary I denounce, I condemn, I indict terrorism and violence of that sort and simultaneously I said I refused to denounce, condemn or indict those who legitimately struggle for restoration of their human rights and for justice.

Jim McDougal:

That is being interpreted, frankly, by many people in Ireland as legitimising IRA violence.

Archbishop:

What in the world am I supposed to do? Let them tell me what I'm supposed to do. I am the Archbishop of New York. St. Patrick is the Patron Saint of my Cathedral and of this Archdiocese. There is a parade in his honour, no matter who perceives what to the contrary. I have made it constantly clear and thank God it is obvious that the overwhelming number of Catholics and Irish in New York recognise my motive, recognise my continued denunciations of the violence and the terrorism and how much clearer can a man be.

Jim McDougal:

You don't though, as some people would suggest, equate IRA violence with oppression by Britain?

Archbishop:

I think that's a very foolish way to look at things and a very foolish perception. Violence begets violence. There are two types of violence. There is physical, bloody violence that takes human life and terrorises people. There is violence that deprives people of their human rights and wracks injustice upon them. Let God decide which is the worst form of violence.

Jim McDougal:

What, in the end, Archbishop, do you think is the answer to the problem?

Archbishop:

As I pleaded in my sermon yesterday, a sermon I would like all of Ireland and all of England to hear, I pleaded for dialogue, I pleaded for rational discussion, I pleaded for recognition that we are all human beings made in the image and likeness of Almighty God. Only that ultimately, only that love is going to end this bitter injustice and ceaseless slaughter.

Jim McDougal:

Archbishop, thank you.
